

# HISTORY PLAZA

The first people to live along the banks of the Guadalupe River arrived as early as 8,000 B.C. The Mu-wekma, a tribe of the Ohlone, fished, hunted and traded local resources, such as abalone and cinnabar, with Native Americans from as far away as what is now Colorado and Nevada. In 1797 el Pueblo de San José Guadalupe (established by the Spaniards) was relocated to this area along the river, replacing the earlier settlement downstream that had been repeatedly flooded. Local families were given plots of land, called *suertes*, for planting crops.

After 1850, the population of the *pueblo* (town) began to change and more immigrants from Central Europe came to take up residence. Frank Pozzo, a merchant from Dalmatia, a region in Northern Italy, was one of the first to build a home on River Street. Mr. Pozzo established the Dalmatian Benevolent Society, which aided other immigrants from his homeland. Walking through the neighborhood in the 1870's, you would have met many settlers from Austria to Hungary; a soap maker from Germany, a gasfitter from Austria, and a French stonecutter named Maurice Prindiville. Mr. Prindiville's small shop was the neighborhood's only business until 1900.

By 1915 many residents were single Italian men renting modest rooms in the local hotel. Hotel Torino not only provided food and lodging, but also sport – a bocce ball court. Within 10 years, Italian families owned two-thirds of the area's homes. A builder named Felix Savio built and owned several houses on River Street, including two that he salvaged from San Francisco's 1906 earthquake and then moved to San José.

In 1912, a citizens group raised \$3,000 – an impressive amount then – to dam the river just above what is now the St. John Street Bridge. The result: Lake Monahan, named for Mayor Monahan. It was short-lived. After two seasons of mosquitoes and flooding, local residents demolished the dam.